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IN THE DEEP WOODS

Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon grabbed him.—Page 32.

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IN THE DEEP WOODS

BY

ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE
AUTHOR OF "THE HOLLOW TREE," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

J. M. CONDÉ

NEW YORK
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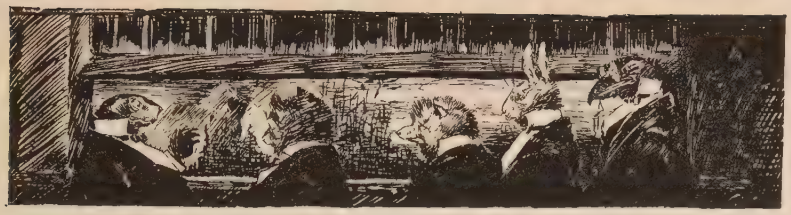


I

THE LITTLE LADY.

THE Little Lady who lives in the House of Many Windows (sometimes called a flat or an apartment by people who, because they are grown up, do not know any better) had been spending the summer on a nice farm in the Land of Pleasant Fields. There had been many things to see—little pigs among other things, and some very small chickens. Also a cow with two calves—one a dark red one, and one spotted, even to its tail, that looked like a barber pole.

Amid all this, and a great deal more, not forgetting the Hillside of Sweet Fruits, the Little Lady had almost forgotten a number of people who lived in the Big Deep Woods, and whose acquaintance she had made through the Story Teller during the winter before, while sailing at evening in the Rockaby Chair for the Shore of White Pillows.

But when the cold winds began to blow and they were all

back to the City of Rumbling Streets in the House of Many Windows again and she heard the wind men moaning in the speaking tube, she forgot even the striped tailed calf, and remembered all at once the dark forest and the queer people who dwelt there. And when the Story Teller that night had drawn his chair up before the fire and sat rocking she climbed upon his knee and rocked, too, while he thought, and smoked, and looked into the blaze.

The Little Lady waited a good while. Then she took hold of the lapel of his coat and tugged it gently and looked up into the Story Teller's face.

"Tell me a story," she commanded softly. "One about Mr. Crow and Mr. 'Possum, and Mr. Jack Rabbit and all the others. What did they do this summer? You know; tell it."

The Story Teller grumbled something about not having met any of these fellows lately, and rocked a little harder and thought very fast.

"I s'pose you've heard about Mr. Crow's April fool," he said, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe into the grate.

"No, I haven't—not that story—I never heard that story," she said eagerly.

So, then, the Story Teller rocked some more, and half shut his eyes and began.

THE STORY OF THE C. X. PIE.

Told the 'Coon and 'Possum about it right away.

II

THE STORY OF THE C. X. PIE.

MR. CROW PLANS AN APRIL FIRST PARTY AND PREPARES A SURPRISE FOR THE OCCASION.

ONCE upon a time when the Crow and the 'Coon and the 'Possum lived together in three big hollow branches of a great Hollow Tree in the Big Deep Woods, and used to meet and have good times together in the parlor down stairs, the Crow made up his mind to have a party next day. He told the 'Coon and the 'Possum about it right away, and they asked him if he was going to have Mr. Dog this time, and Mr. Crow said "No" and looked foolish, because once he did have Mr. Dog just for a joke and got the worst of it himself.*

"I remember about that," said the Little Lady.

That's what the Crow did, too—remembered and he had never felt just right about the way he had been fooled when he meant to fool the others. So when they reminded him about Mr. Dog he said to himself that he would fool them yet, and he'd do it at this very party.

But he made b'lieve he was very meek and said he was go-

* Hollow Tree, "Mr. Crow's Company."

ing to have Mr. Jack Rabbit over, and Mr. Turtle, to make a full table, and that they would have chicken pie and hot biscuits with maple syrup for dinner. This suited the 'Coon and the 'Possum exactly, for Mr. Crow was the best cook anywhere in the country and they were both fond of good things. The 'Coon said he'd go right away with the invitation for Jack Rabbit, and the 'Possum said that he felt like taking a walk anyway, and that he'd pass around by the Wide Blue Water where Mr. Turtle lived, and tell him. So off they went and left Mr. Crow all alone to think about it and get ready.

He walked back and forth a while in his own room and scratched his head, and then he went down stairs out in the sun and thought some more. All at once he jumped right straight up and laughed, for he happened to remember that it was the last day of March, and that it was the very thing to have a party on April fool day, and fool the 'Possum and the 'Coon in some way, so that the others would laugh and say it was the best joke of the season. Then he thought of a way to fool them, and pretty soon he had that fixed, too.

He didn't wait a minute, but went right to cooking and baking just as hard as ever he could, and pretty soon he had three chicken pies done, as fine looking as any you ever saw. And two of them were fine, sure enough—just as fine as Mr. Crow could make them—but the other wasn't chicken at all. It was made out of leaves and sticks, and the only thing good about it was the crust. This pie he intended for the 'Coon

He walked back and forth a while in his own room.

and the 'Possum, and one of the good ones was for Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Turtle. The last one was for himself, with an extra piece over for anybody that might happen to want a second helping.

Well, he set them all in a row on the kitchen table, and walked up and down looking at them and laughing and thinking what fun it would be for the others when Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon cut their pie and tried to eat what was inside of it. He had the pies set on the table so he knew just which was which, and besides had made some letters on the upper crust so the right ones would be sure to get them. On the leaf pie he had "P. C.," for 'Possum and 'Coon. On one of the others he had "R. T.," for Rabbit and Turtle. On the last one he had "C. X.," which stood for Crow, and an extra piece for manners. He had put these letters where the fancy thing is in the centre of pies, and had joined them together so you'd hardly notice them at first.

All at once, while he was looking at them and laughing, he heard Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum coming back. Then he called out to them and asked them if they had invited the guests and told them to come up and see the pies he had made while they were gone. So they came up and looked at them, and said they certainly were fine, and that Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Turtle were busy getting out their best clothes, and would be there early .

Then the Crow said he guessed he'd slip over to Mr. Man's

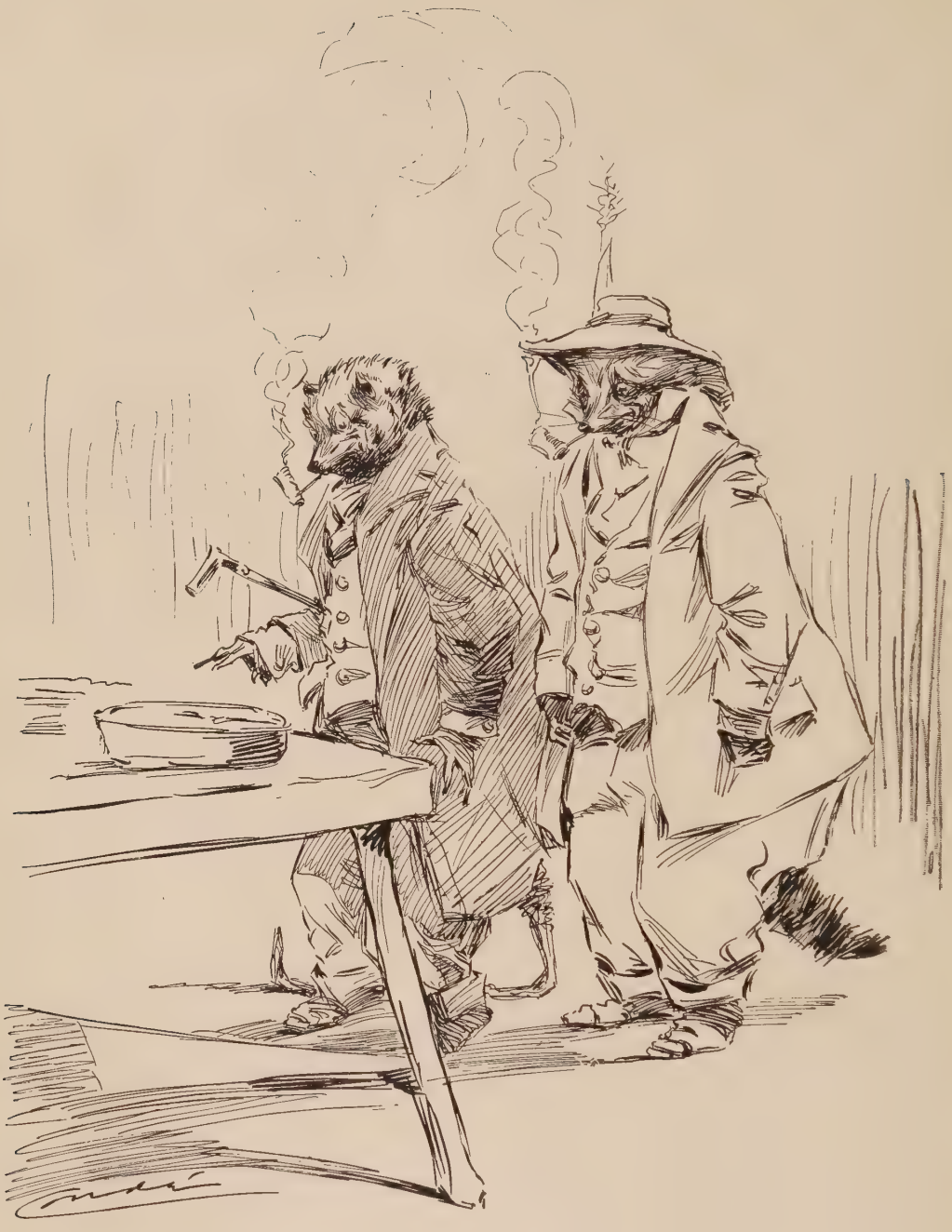
WENT OUT IN THE SUN AND THOUGHT SOME MORE.

pantry and borrow some maple syrup while Mr. Man was at dinner and be back for early supper. So off he went and left the 'Coon and the 'Possum there together.

When he'd been gone awhile Mr. 'Possum said he believed he'd take one more look at those nice pies, and Mr. 'Coon said he guessed he would, too. So they went up to Mr. Crow's kitchen again and stood and looked at them till they were so hungry that Mr. 'Possum licked out his tongue and walked up and smelled of them. First he smelled a good long smell of the C. X. pie—so—and said, "O-o-oh! How nice!" Then he smelled a very long smell of the R. T. pie—so——— and said, "O-o-o-o-oh! How delicious!" Then he smelled a very, very long smell of the P. C. pie—so———and said, "O-o-o-o-o-oh! How strange!"

That made the 'Coon want to smell, too, and when he had smelled of all three he said that there certainly did seem to be a difference in those pies, and that the last one had a sort of a woodsy spring-like flavor, like the first of April. That made the 'Possum jump, and he said he had not remembered till that very minute that to-morrow was the first, sure enough. Then he said he didn't suppose Mr. Crow would care how the pies were set on the table, so he moved them about and put the P. C. pie where the C. X. pie had stood, and the C. X. pie at the end instead of the P. C. pie. But while he was doing it he happened to notice the joined letters in the middle of the pies, which he hadn't seen before. He

WENT RIGHT TO COOKING AND BAKING.



STOOD AND LOOKED AT THEM.

looked at first one and then the other, and studied a minute what to do. Then he picked up an old thin knife that Mr. Crow used for cutting around cake and slipping pies out sometimes when they stuck to the pan.

"Oh," said Mr. 'Coon. "I hope you're not going to cut them!"

"Well," said Mr. 'Possum, "Not so's you'll notice it."

Then he slipped the thin knife around the top crust of the P. C. pie and lifted it off carefully and looked in and made a very queer face. Mr. 'Coon came and looked in, too, and made another very queer face. Then Mr. 'Possum lifted off the top of the C. X. pie and looked in and smiled, and Mr. 'Coon looked in and smiled, too. There were two nice, fat chicken legs right on top, and Mr. 'Coon took one and Mr. 'Possum the other, because they said that as this was to be their pie any way, they might just as well have a little taste of it beforehand. Then they changed the covers and put the P. C. cover on the good pie and C. X. cover on the fool pie, and just then they heard Mr. Crow coming home, and slipped down into the parlor and up into their own rooms and pretended to be asleep when he came in.

THEN HE SMELLED A VERY, VERY LONG SMELL.

III

THE STORY OF THE C. X. PIE.

MR. CROW'S PARTY AND THE OPENING OF THE PIES.

WELL, next morning Mr. Crow was down stairs bright and early, putting the big parlor room in order and setting the table. Pretty soon the 'Coon and 'Possum came down, too, and helped him, and now and then, when they happened to look at each other across the table, they would wink and smile, but they didn't say a word. By and by the three pies were brought in and set in a row at one end of the table, and nobody could tell from looking at them but what they were exactly as the Crow had baked them.

Just then there was a knock down stairs, and Mr. Rabbit came in carrying a large bunch of early flowers that he had gathered as he came along, and dressed in his new spring suit. They saw a little white roll in one of his coat pockets, too, and they knew it was a poem for the occasion, for Jack Rabbit writes poems whenever he gets a chance, specially in the early springtime.

Mr. Crow hurried out and got the pair of pink glass vases

that Mr. 'Coon had given him for Christmas and put the flowers in them for the table, while he asked Jack Rabbit if it was muddy walking and if he had seen anything of Mr. Turtle.

Mr. Rabbit said that the ground was rather damp, but that he could pick his way pretty well, and that he had never seen such a wet spring since the year that the Wide Blue Water came up over his back garden and drowned his early pease. He hadn't seen Mr. Turtle, but just then Mr. Turtle himself waddled in with a basket of nice water salad, which he had gathered before starting. Then Mr. Crow hurried off to put his biscuits in the oven and left the others to sit around the table and talk.

After they had talked about the weather and told the latest things that had happened to Mr. Dog, who lived with Mr. Man, and whom none of them liked very well, the 'Possum said all at once that being this was April First he shouldn't wonder if it was to be a sort of surprise party in some way.

That made Mr. Turtle and Jack Rabbit curious right away, and they wanted to know what kind of a surprise he thought it was going to be and if he thought it would be a pleasant one. Mr. 'Possum said he was sure it would be pleasant, and then he looked at the three fine pies on the table and said it was just as apt to be in one of those pies as anywhere. Then Mr. Turtle said he'd heard of "four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie," and how they began to sing when the pie was opened, but he hoped it wouldn't be that kind of a sur-

"Oh," said Mr. 'Coon, "I hope you're not going to cut them."

prise, for he didn't care much for blackbirds himself, specially in pies. The 'Possum said there might be one black bird sing when these pies were opened, but he didn't b'lieve there'd be any more, which made the 'Coon laugh so he nearly fell off his chair. Just then they heard the Crow coming, and the 'Possum whispered quick to the Turtle and the Rabbit that they must be sure and eat their pie all up and ask for more, as Mr. Crow was proud of his cooking and always felt offended when people didn't eat heartily.

Well, Mr. Crow came in carrying a great pan of fine biscuits and set them down in the middle of the table, while everybody said, "What lovely biscuits!" and asked whether they were made with buttermilk or baking powder, and wanted his recipe. Mr. Crow said he didn't have any recipe, but just took a pinch of this and a pinch of that, and that there was a good deal in the knack and in having things come natural, just as it was natural for Mr. Rabbit to write poetry. Then he said he hoped Mr. Rabbit hadn't forgotten to think up a few thoughts for this occasion, and Mr. Rabbit said that he had been too busy with spring work to write much lately, but that he did have a few lines in his pocket that they might be willing to listen to. So then he took out the roll he had brought and put on his glasses and stood up, while all the others sat still and listened.

Oh, sweet the month of April,
When birds begin to twitter!

LOOKED IN AND MADE A QUEER FACE.

When dewdrops on the clover
  And tender grasses glitter!
When every shoot of lettuce
  That from the ground arises
Gives promise of a salad—
  Oh, month of sweet surprises!

You see Mr. Rabbit is a great gardener, and specially fond of young clover and tender salad.

Oh, sweet the month of April,
  When youthful chicks are hatching,
And gayly in the meadows
  Around their ma are scratching!
The finest way to eat them
  In dumpling or in pies is—
Oh, here's to you, sweet April,
  With all your glad surprises!

Mr. Rabbit knew that the Crow would have chicken either in dumpling or pies, and anyhow he needed "pies is" to rhyme with "surprises," and when he came to those lines and sat down the others shouted and laughed and Mr. Crow pounded on the table and declared he couldn't have done better if he'd been a poet and written it himself! And the 'Coon and the 'Possum both pounded too and said "That's so! That's so!"

Then Mr. Crow shoved the R. T. pie over between Jack Rabbit and Mr. Turtle and the pie that was marked P. C. between the 'Coon and the 'Possum. The C. X. pie he pulled up in front of himself, for of course he never even suspected that the top crust on them had been changed by the 'Possum.

MR. RABBIT CAME IN CARRYING A LARGE BUNCH OF EARLY FLOWERS.

"The finest way to eat them
In dumpling or in pies is,"

he said, quoting Mr. Rabbit's poem,

"Oh, here's to you, sweet April,
With all your glad surprises,

Then he told them not to be bashful, but to help themselves and remember there was plenty more where that came from. Just as he said this he picked up his knife and stuck it down deep into the C. X. pie. Mr. 'Possum picked up his knife and stuck it down deep into the P. C. pie, and Mr. Rabbit picked up his knife and stuck it into the R. T. pie and cut it in half. Mr. Turtle was watching him pretty anxiously, for he remembered what the 'Possum had said about a surprise, but when Jack Rabbit laid a smoking half with the gravy running out of it on his plate he forgot all about everything else.

Mr. 'Possum didn't divide the P. C. pie just yet, but kept cutting as if it cut very hard, and talking a good deal while he cut. He said that, speaking of surprises, it used to be quite a fashion to fool people on the first of April, and that he'd known lots of the biggest kind of jokes played on people that day. The biggest jokes, though, he said, were those that came back on the people who played them, and that he knew one of that kind once that made him laugh now every time he thought about it. Then he did laugh some, and sawed away and said he guessed he'd struck a bone; and the Coon

MR. TURTLE HIMSELF WADDLED IN.

LEFT THE OTHERS TO SIT AROUND THE TABLE AND TALK.

laughed, too, and Mr. Crow was nearly dying with trying to keep from laughing, for he thought Mr. 'Possum was sawing away on an old stick. He didn't want to let on, though, so he quit looking and commenced cutting his own pie. He laughed to himself and cut a minute, and then, all of a sudden, he didn't want to laugh any more, for he had cut a hole in the top of the C. X. pie and he saw something and smelled something that made him right sick. He looked over quick to Mr. 'Possum's plate, and what he saw there made him sicker yet. For there lay a half of the P. C. pie, and Mr. Crow saw with one look that it was just as fine a chicken pie as ever came out of an oven.

Mr. Coon had a piece on his plate, too, and they were saying what a fine pie it was, and Mr. Turtle and Mr. Rabbit said so, too, and that Mr. Crow was certainly the finest cook in those parts.

While all the others sat still and listened.

IV

THE STORY OF THE C. X. PIE.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MR. CROW AND HIS PIE.

POOR Mr. Crow! You never saw anybody look as sickly and foolish as he did. He thought that he had made a dreadful mistake in marking the pies, and that now he had got to eat or pretend to eat the mess of old leaves and sticks that filled up the C. X. pie clear to the top. He never thought of Mr. 'Possum's changing the crust, and even if he had, he wouldn't have felt any better.

I don't suppose you'll ever know just how bad Mr. Crow did feel, unless you get into a fix like that some time yourself. First he got hot and then he got cold, and the sweat began to break out on his bill like dew drops. He began to eat a little of the crust first, and then he was afraid if he ate the crust away the others would see what was inside of it, so he put his fork in and got a rolled up leaf with gravy on it and whisked it into his mouth and chewed and tried to swallow till his eyes stuck out and the tears ran down in a stream. He was glad that nobody seemed to be looking at him, for everybody else was too busy eating the nice pie, and Mr. 'Possum was just

saying that he liked Mr. Crow's surprises, for he always surprised them by having something better than they expected.

Then he told how once, when they were snowed in, Mr. Crow had kept them all from starving by making a kind of bread called Johnnie cake, and some chicken gravy, and how they could never get him to tell where he got the things to make it of.* He said he thought maybe Mr. Crow would tell pretty soon, though, now. Then they all looked at Mr. Crow and begged him to tell his great secret, and when they looked they saw he wasn't eating his pie, but was just sitting there picking at it with his fork a little. They all told him not to be afraid to eat some of his own nice pie, for they were sure there'd be plenty, and Mr. Crow said in a weakly voice that when he cooked he never could eat very much. He said he guessed he'd take a biscuit and some syrup because he didn't feel quite well, anyway. So he pushed the C. X. pie away and ate a biscuit with butter and syrup on it, and felt a good deal better.

But pretty soon Mr. Turtle finished his piece and remembered what Mr. 'Possum had whispered about asking for a second helping. So he said he guessed he'd take another piece of that fine pie—just a small one to hold the other down. Mr. Rabbit said he guessed he'd have to ask for another small piece, too, it was so good, and the Coon and the 'Possum both said that, although they were home folks and used to

* Hollow Tree, "The Three Friends."

MR. TURTLE WAS WATCHING HIM PRETTY ANXIOUSLY.

Mr. Crow's good cooking, they certainly would have to take another little piece of that fine pie.

Then Mr. Crow knew there were only two things that he could do. He could either faint, or "holler" "Fire!" And, after studying for about half a second, he keeled right over and fainted dead away.

Of course that stopped the dinner for a while. Jack Rabbit and Mr. Turtle jumped up frightened, and the Coon and the 'Possum pretended to be frightened, too. They all ran to Mr. Crow and carried him up stairs to his room and put him on his bed. Then Mr. Coon brought some water and Mr. Rabbit fanned him and Mr. Turtle unbuttoned his vest to give him air. Mr. 'Possum he stood still and gave orders, and said pretty soon that he was sure a good strong hot mustard poultice would help matters. When he said that Mr. Crow opened his eyes a little pinch and asked where he was, and then he said he guessed he must have fainted, for he'd been taken with a dreadful bad turn at the table and didn't remember any more.

Mr. 'Possum winked at Mr. Coon and said yes, that Mr. Crow had even forgot to give them a second helping of pie, but that he supposed Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Turtle could go back and help themselves. Then the sweat broke out on Mr. Crow again, and he said he hoped they wouldn't, for it would be cold now and they would find the biscuits and syrup much better. Jack Rabbit said he thought so, too, and the 'Pos-

THEN, ALL OF A SUDDEN, HE DIDN'T WANT TO LAUGH ANY MORE.

sum, who was really beginning to feel sorry for the poor Crow, said the same, and so did the others. So then Mr. Crow got better as quick as anything, and they all went back down stairs and ate the biscuits and syrup, which were certainly very fine. Once Mr. Rabbit wondered what that nice, leafy smell was that he got a whiff of now and then, and Mr. Turtle said he'd been thinking about that, too. Then Mr. Coon helped out and said that he s'posed it was Mr. Man and Mr. Dog burning brush over on the edge of the Wide Grass Lands, and he went on to make a little speech that was kind of a reply to Mr. Rabbit's poem. He said how nice it was to give one's friends pleasant surprises of good things as Mr. Crow had done, instead of unpleasant ones such as Mr. 'Possum had mentioned, and all the others said, "Yes, Yes!" and cheered him, all except Mr. Crow, who looked down into his plate and didn't say a word, but just seemed to be thinking and thinking.

And by and by, when Jack Rabbit and Mr. Turtle said goodby and went away, he hurried back to the table, and was just going to take the C. X. pie up to his own part of the house, when Mr. 'Possum and Mr. Coon grabbed him and said they must have a piece of that pie, after all. And when Mr. Crow wasn't going to give it to them they both commenced to laugh and said it was their pie anyway, and that they meant to have it. And right then Mr. Crow knew just what had happened, and that it was no use to be an April fool any

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'LL EVER KNOW JUST HOW BAD MR. CROW DID FEEL.

FAINTED DEAD AWAY.

longer. He stood still a minute, looking first at Mr. Coon and then at Mr. 'Possum. Then he walked to the window and flung the C. X. pie out as far as he could send it among the leaves and brush, where it belonged. The Coon stood on one side and the 'Possum on the other, and they watched it strike and roll out of sight before they said anything. Then Mr. Coon said that perhaps it would be a good time now to tell the great secret of the Johnnie cake and gravy, and Mr. Crow said he would do that and anything else they wanted him to if they'd promise they wouldn't tell this joke on him to anybody—Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Turtle especially. Then he went right on and told them the great secret of the Johnnie cake, and the Coon and the 'Possum did promise, though they didn't intend to tell anyway, for they thought a great deal of Mr. Crow and they were all good friends.

"But, dear me!" exclaimed the story teller, "I've been telling for three evenings on this story, and here it is nine o'clock again."

"You'll tell some more to-morrow night won't you?" said the Little Lady, drowsily.

"We'll have a story about Mr. Jack Rabbit next time," said the story teller.

MR. RABBIT EXPLAINS.

THEY SAT DOWN FOR A SMOKE AND A TALK.

V

MR. RABBIT EXPLAINS.

AN EASTER STORY.

"NOW tell me the rabbit story," commanded the Little Lady on the next evening. "You know you promised to."

"So I did," said the Story Teller, "and it goes this way:—

"One afternoon in the early spring Mr. Jack Rabbit and his friends were out for an airing. The Hollow Tree people were along, and Mr. Turtle, as usual. By and by they came to a log under a big tree and sat down for a smoke and talk. They talked about the weather at first and other things, till somebody mentioned Easter. Then they all had something to say about that.

" 'What I object to,' says Mr. Rabbit, when it came his time to talk, 'is this thing of people always saying that the Easter eggs belong to me.'

" 'Oh, but that's just a joke,' says Mr. Coon, laughing.

" 'I know it's just a joke, of course, but it's a pretty old joke, and I'm tired of it,' says Jack Rabbit.

" 'How did it get started anyway?' asked Mr. 'Possum.

"Then Mr. Rabbit took his pipe out of his mouth and leaned forward a little, so he could talk better.

" 'I tell you how it got started,' he says, 'and after that I don't want to hear any more of it. This is how it happened:—

" 'Once upon a time, as much as twenty grandmothers back, I should think, there was a very nice family of Rabbits that lived in a grassy place on a hillside back of a big farmyard. There was quite a hole in the ground there, and they had a cosey home in it, and a soft bed for their little folk.

" 'Now, every bright morning, Father and Mother Rabbit used to take the children out for a walk, and for a few lessons in running and hiding from Mr. Dog, who bothered about a good deal, and one day as they were coming home they heard a great cackling, and when they got to their house there was a nice fresh egg lying right in the children's bed. Some old hen from the farmyard had slipped in and laid it while they were gone. A good many hens, especially old hens, like to hide their nests that way, and this was one of that kind.

" 'Well, of course all the young Rabbits claimed it, and Mother Rabbit at last gave it to the smallest and weakest one of the children, a little girl, who was always painting things with the juice of flower petals. And the very first thing that little girl did was to stain that egg all over with violet juice, not thinking what trouble it was going to cause our family forever after.

A FEW LESSONS IN RUNNING AND HIDING.

" 'It was a nice blue egg when she got through with it, and the next day, when they all came back from their walk again there was another white egg right by it. The old hen had been there again and laid another while they were gone. The second little girl claimed that egg, of course, and she painted it a bright yellow with buttercup juice. Then the next day there was another egg, and the next day there was another egg, and the next day there was another egg, until there was one apiece for every one of the children, and some over.

" 'And they all painted them. Some painted theirs pink or red with roseleaves or japonica, some painted them yellow with buttercups, and some blue or purple with violets, as the first little girl had done. They had so many at last that it crowded them out of their bed, and they had to sleep on the floor.

" 'And then, one Sunday, and it must have been Easter Sunday, they all went out walking again, and when they came back every one of those beautiful colored eggs was gone. The children cried and made a great fuss, but it was no use. Some of Mr. Man's boys out hunting hen's nests had found them and taken them all home with them.

" 'And of course all those colored eggs set Mr. Man to wondering, and he came with his boys to the place where they had found them; and when they looked in out jumped the whole Rabbit family, helter skelter in every direction.

" 'And right then,' said Mr. Rabbit, leaning over to light

IT WAS A NICE BLUE EGG WHEN SHE GOT THROUGH WITH IT.

They had to sleep on the floor.

his pipe from Mr. 'Possum's, 'right then Mr. Man declared those colored eggs were rabbit eggs, and he's kept on saying so ever since, though he knows better, and he knows I don't like it. He takes eggs and colors them himself now, and makes believe they're mine, and he puts my picture all over things about Eastér time. I suppose he thinks I don't care, but I do, and I wish that little Miss Rabbit twenty grandmothers back had left that old hen's egg white as she found it.'

" 'It's too bad,' says Mr. Crow. 'It's like that story they tell about the fox making me drop the cheese.'

" 'Or like Mr. Man making believe that the combs he uses are really made out of my shell,' says Mr. Turtle.

"Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Possum shook their heads. They had their troubles, too."

MR. TURTLE'S THUNDER STORY.

VI

MR. TURTLE'S THUNDER STORY.

THE WAY OF THE FIRST THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.

ONCE upon a time, said the Story Teller, when the Crow and the Coon and the 'Possum lived together in three big, hollow branches of a big, big, hollow tree in the big, big, Big Deep Woods, and used to meet and have good times together in the parlor down stairs, they had Jack Rabbit and Mr. Turtle in for supper. It was a nice supper, too, for it was just about strawberry time, and strawberries grow thicker in the Big Deep Woods than fur on a kitten's back. Mr. Crow, who is a great cook, had made a nice shortcake, and been over to Mr. Man's pantry, where he gets some of his best things, and borrowed a pail of sweet cream when Mr. Man wasn't at home.

"Of course they had fried chicken, too, first, and by the time they were through their shortcake and had lit their pipes Mr. 'Possum, who likes good things better than anybody, almost, could hardly open his eyes. He said he wished he was a poet, like Mr. Jack Rabbit, for he had never been so full of summer happiness since he was born, and if he could only

LEANING OVER TO LIGHT HIS PIPE FROM MR. 'POSSUM'S.

make rhymes, he knew that poetry would slip right off his tongue. Then, of course, Mr. Rabbit wanted to show off, and without stopping a second he commenced to talk poetry—this way:—

"In the summer time I make a rhyme
For every breeze that passes,
For I can always make it chime
With lassies, grasses, sasses."

"Mr. 'Possum said he couldn't do that if it was to save him from being hung the next minute, and Mr. Rabbit went right on without catching his breath:—

"Where e'er I go my verses flow—
I keep it up for hours.
I'm never short of rhymes, you know,
With bowers, flowers, showers."

"Well, that set them all to wondering how Jack Rabbit could do it so easily, and Mr. Rabbit didn't think to tell them how he'd sat up all the night before to compose this poetry, so's to have it on hand and ready for a chance to use it. He said that it was somebody else's turn now, and that maybe Mr. Turtle would give them a performance of some kind. Mr. Turtle wanted to change the subject, and got up and walked over to the window. He said that, speaking of showers, it was so warm and close, he shouldn't wonder if they had one before morning. He said he believed there was lightning now, off in the west, and seemed like he could hear it thunder, too. Then they all talked about thunder and light-

HAD JACK RABBIT AND MR. TURTLE IN FOR SUPPER.

ning and what they were. But nobody seemed to know except Mr. Turtle himself.

" 'Why,' he said, 'I thought everybody knew that!' Then he went on to say that he'd known the story ever since he wasn't 'any bigger than a pants button,' and all the others said he must tell it to them, because it was his turn, anyway. And Mr. Turtle was glad to do that, for he really wanted to show off a little, like Jack Rabbit, only he hadn't known before how to do it. So he filled up his pipe nice and fresh, and lit it, and began.

" 'Well,' he said, 'of course you know my family all live to be pretty old. I'm only three hundred and sixteen next spring myself, but Uncle Tom Turtle, who lives up by the forks, is a good deal over nine hundred, and he isn't nearly as old as Father Storm Turtle and his wife, who live up in the Big West Hills, and make the thunder and lightning.'

"Mr. Turtle stopped a minute to light his pipe again, and all the others just looked at him and couldn't say a word. They knew he was pretty old, but they had never thought much about it before, and what he said about Father and Mother Storm Turtle they had never even heard of. But Mr. Turtle just lit his pipe, and puffed, and said:—

" 'To tell the truth, I never did hear of any of our family dying of old age, and I shouldn't wonder if Old Man Turtle Himself would still be alive, too, if he hadn't tried to swallow a mussel fish with the shell on and got it stuck in his throat a

Looking right at the shell of Old Man Turtle Himself.

million and twenty-five years ago last spring. Anyhow, that's according to the date cut on his shell overcoat that Uncle Tom Turtle saw once at Father Storm's house up in the Big West Hills.

" 'I don't know how many great grandfathers back Father Storm is from me, nor how many from Father Storm Old Man Turtle Himself was, but I know Father Storm got his shell overcoat after the muscle fish wouldn't go down, and that it was a great deal too big to take in the house, and it used to set out in the yard on four bricks, for the children to play under.

" 'Father Storm Turtle had a big family then, and they were pretty troublesome. They had a habit of wandering off in the woods and forgetting to come back. Every night Mother Storm had to stand in the door and call and call and not be able to sleep if they didn't come, especially when it was cloudy and looked like rain. She knew that if they got wet they'd all come home with bad colds and sore throats and make trouble and expense. Three of them—named Slop, Splash and Paddle—were worse than any of the others, for even when it didn't rain they were always playing in dirty puddles, and would come home all mud and with wet feet.

VII

MR. TURTLE'S THUNDER STORY.

FATHER STORM'S PLAN AND HOW IT WORKED.

AT last, one day, when Mother Storm Turtle had shouted herself hoarse and couldn't make any of them hear, she said she wouldn't put up with it any longer, and that Father Storm had got to fix up some way to call those children home when she wanted them, especially when it was going to rain, as it was now. So Father Storm went out into the front yard and sat down and looked at the clouds and thought and thought.

"'All at once, just as he was about to give it up, he happened to be looking right at the shell of Old Man Turtle Himself. He jumped up quick and hit it with his cane, and when it made quite a loud sound he laughed, for he knew, now, how he could make those children hear when he wanted them. He didn't say a word to Mother Storm Turtle, but went right to work and dug two holes and put up two tall posts in the yard and fastened a stout beam across the top of them. Then he worked until he had bored a hole in one end of the shell of Old Man Turtle Himself, and put a chain in it and dragged it over and strung it up between the posts, so that it swung

there and didn't quite touch the ground. That, of course, made a thing a good deal like Mr. Man's dinner gong, only a hundred times as big, and about a thousand times as loud. Then Father Storm went out into the woodhouse to make a club to beat it with, laughing to himself now and then when he thought how Mother Storm Turtle would most have a fit when she heard it for the first time.

"But while Father Storm Turtle was doing so much, Mother Storm had been thinking and doing some herself. She was getting supper, and when she looked into the fire to put in a stick of wood, she just happened to think that if she could make a torch big enough and bright enough, when she stood in the door and waved it, those children would see the light, especially nights when it was dark just before a heavy rain. So she went right to work and made one, just as big as she could make it, and put lots of oil and fat on it, to make it bright. She laughed to think how Father Storm Turtle would jump when she waved that out the door, and how the children would come running when they saw the big flash. Then she noticed that it was getting darker and darker and would rain in a minute. So she hurried up and lit it and stepped to the door and gave it a great big swing. And just that second Father Storm hit the shell of Old Man Turtle Himself with a big hickory club, and there was never such a light nor such a roar in the world as that was.

"Mother Storm Turtle tumbled over backward and set

WENT RIGHT TO WORK AND DUG TWO HOLES.

the house afire with her torch, and Father Storm was so frightened by the big light that at first he couldn't help her put the fire out. And just then it began raining like forty, and all the children came running and screaming out of the woods, half scared to death by the big light and noise. It made a terrible commotion there for a few minutes, until they got the fire put out, and people heard it all over the country, even to Mr. Man's house. And when they found out what it was, and who started it, everybody called it a 'storm.' And rain and wind and thunder and lightning, or most any other kind of a big fuss, is called a 'storm' to this day, after Father and Mother Storm Turtle.

"And that," said Mr. Turtle, lighting his pipe once more, "was the first thunder and lightning, and whenever people saw it after that they said, 'We're going to have another storm!' For Father and Mother Storm Turtle went right on using the big torch and the shell of Old Man Turtle Himself to call in the children just before a rain, and the children would come running every time, all except Slop, Splash and Paddle, who got so at last that they liked the mud and dirty water better than anything else. They liked the mud so well that Father Storm told them one day they might go and live in the mud and be named Mud for all he cared; and so they did, and their names were Mud, and they and all their families live in dirty water and are called Mud Turtles to this day. They never went home again, but whenever they hear

THERE NEVER WAS SUCH A LIGHT NOR SUCH A ROAR IN THE WORLD AS THAT WAS.

Father Storm pounding on the shell, they stop whatever they are doing and listen. And that's how the saying began that 'a Mud Turtle never lets go till it thunders.' "

"What makes the noise always get louder and the light brighter just before it rains?" asked Jack Rabbit.

"Why, you see," said Mr. Turtle, "Father and Mother Storm's grandchildren and great-grandchildren are a good deal scattered now, and as the old people run the thunder and lightning mostly on their account, they try to make it just about bright enough and loud enough to keep up with the rain wherever it goes."

"It's plenty loud enough," said Mr. Coon solemnly.

"And plenty bright enough," said Mr. Crow, blinking.

"What makes it set things on fire sometimes?" asked Mr. 'Possum sleepily.

"That's when Mother Storm Turtle swings her torch too hard and coals fly out of it," said Mr. Turtle, as he got up and walked over to the window.

Then the Crow and the Coon and the 'Possum and Jack Rabbit got up, too, and walked over, and they all looked out together. It was dark among the trees below them, and Mr. Turtle pointed off toward the Big West Hills.

"You see," he said, speaking low, "Mother Storm is beginning to swing her torch, and you'll hear Father Storm pounding before long on the shell of Old Man Turtle Himself."

SLOP AND SPLASH AND PADDLE.

So the five friends stood very still and listened and pretty soon they did hear a low far off rumble, sure enough.

"That means it's time to start for home," said Mr. Jack Rabbit, reaching for his hat and cane.

Mr. Turtle reached for his hat and cane, too, and they felt their way down the dim stairs, with Mr. Coon holding a candle, and Mr. Crow and Mr. 'Possum looking after them.

"Good night, everybody," said Mr. Turtle.

"Push the latch string in from the outside," called Mr. Crow. "Then, I won't have to come down."

"All right!
Good night!"

called back Jack Rabbit.

"Good night! Come again!" called the Crow and the Coon and the 'Possum.

A RAIN IN THE NIGHT.

Called to Jack Rabbit to push in the latch string.

VIII

A RAIN IN THE NIGHT.

A WINDOW THAT WASN'T CLOSED, AND WHO CLOSED IT.

THE night was warm in the Hollow Tree. Jack Rabbit and Mr. Turtle, who had been spending the evening with the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow, had hurried off to their homes, so as to get there before the rain set in.

They had all stood by an open parlor window and seen it coming over the Big West Hills, and the visitors knew they'd catch it if they didn't hurry. Mr. Crow and the others had watched them down stairs, and called to Jack Rabbit to push in the latch string, which would fasten the door from the outside. Then Mr. 'Possum had taken his candle, and Mr. 'Coon had taken his candle, and Mr. Crow had taken his candle, and each had gone up to his own room and scrambled into bed quick, so's to be able to cover up his head when it thundered.

Well, they hadn't any more than all gone to bed before Mr. Crow suddenly happened to remember that, being in such a hurry, none of them had thought to close the parlor window, and it would rain in as sure as the world. There was a little

table close to the window, with some of his best things on it, too, and if it rained in they would all get wet and be spoiled. He thought about this twice, and maybe more than twice, and the more he thought about it the less he wanted to get up and close that window. Then, all at once, there came a flash of lightning and low growling thunder. Down he bobbed under the covers, and this made him want to get up less than ever. He knew, though, that it would be raining hard pretty soon, and spoiling his things. He had to do something right off.

So, after thinking a minute, he sat up in bed and called out:

"Oh, Mr. 'Coon! You forgot to close the parlor window. It will rain in on your things."

But Mr. 'Coon called back:

"It won't hurt MY things, Mr. Crow. They're over on the other side of the room."

And Mr. 'Possum, who was sitting up in bed, too, listened and laughed in the dark.

But just then there was another flash of lightning, and Mr. Crow bobbed down, and Mr. 'Coon bobbed down, and Mr. 'Possum bobbed down, so's not to hear the thunder. Then, pretty soon, Mr. Crow sat up in bed again and called out:

"Oh, Mr. 'Possum! You forgot to close the parlor window. It will rain in on your things."

But Mr. 'Possum called back:

"It won't hurt MY things, Mr. Crow. They're all over by the stairs."

And Mr. 'Coon, who was sitting up in bed, listened and laughed in the dark, too.

Then for a minute Mr. Crow didn't know but that he'd have to go down and shut that window himself, after all. And while he was thinking how much he didn't want to, there came another flash of lightning, brighter than ever, and Mr. Crow and Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum all bobbed down again and covered up their heads, so's not to hear the thunder. But Mr. Crow heard it a little, anyway, and it set him to thinking. So when he sat up again he called out:

"Oh, Mr. 'Coon, did Jack Rabbit push in the latch string down stairs?"

And Mr. 'Coon called back:

"I s'pose so, Mr. Crow. You told him to. Why?"

"Oh, nothing, only he left in a great hurry, and I thought maybe he didn't get it quite in."

And Mr. 'Possum listened again, but this time he didn't laugh.

Then Mr. Crow called out to him, too:

"Oh, Mr. 'Possum, did Mr. Rabbit push in the latch string when he left?"

And Mr. Possum called back:

"I don't know, Mr. Crow. But you told him to. Why?"

"Oh, nothing; only I heard something just now that sounded like Mr. Dog barking and coming this way."

And Mr. 'Coon listened again, too, but he didn't laugh any this time, either.

And just then there was another flash of lightning, a good deal brighter than any of the other flashes, and down went Mr. Crow again, and down went Mr. 'Coon again, and down went Mr. 'Possum again, so's not to hear it thunder. But they did hear it, even under the bedclothes, and being covered up that way, and thinking about Mr. Dog anyhow, made it sound to them exactly like Mr. Dog's voice barking and growling, and coming closer and closer and closer.

And when Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum heard that they didn't wait another minute. They just threw back the covers, both of them, and piled out of bed and made a rush for that down stairs door, as if Mr. Dog was right behind them, sure enough. And of course neither one knew the other had started, and when they got to the head of the stairs they bumped together in the dark, and down they went, over and over, to the bottom. There was a little flash of lightning just as they got there, and they saw that Mr. Rabbit had pushed in the latch string after all.

Then they felt foolish, and each began to blame the other for making him fall down stairs, and both of them said they knew all the time the door was fastened, and that they weren't afraid of Mr. Dog, anyway. They'd only got up,

they said, to shut the parlor window, and they did shut it, both together, as they came back. Then they ran up to their beds quick, while Mr. Crow, who had been listening all the time, laid down and rolled over and laughed and laughed in the dark.

And just then there came another big, bright flash, and down under the covers went all three of them, so's not to hear it thunder. They stayed under a good while that time, and when they put their heads out again the shower had commenced, and the thunder was passing over.

So then, pretty soon, the 'Possum and the 'Coon and the Old Black Crow all dropped off to sleep to the sound of the rain falling among the leaves and branches of the Hollow Tree.

A DEEP WOODS FISHING PARTY.

IX

A DEEP WOODS FISHING PARTY.

AN ADVENTURE WITH MR. DOG AND A VERY LARGE FISH.

ONE warm June morning, when the sun was trying to shine and couldn't, and the air was close and still and sticky, Mr. Jack Rabbit looked out of the window while he was dressing and thought to himself that it would be just the very morning for fish to bite.

Jack Rabbit liked to fish better than anything, almost, so right after breakfast he took an empty tomato can and went out in the back yard and turned over boards till he had the can about half full of bait, with a little dirt thrown on top. Then he reached up under the eaves of the smoke-house and pulled out a long cane pole with a line and hook and floater on it, all rigged up ready, and flung it over his shoulder and started.

Mr. Rabbit walked pretty fast—even lazy folks do that when they go fishing, and Mr. Jack Rabbit wasn't lazy, by a good deal. So pretty soon he came to the Hollow Tree, and there, looking out of an upstairs window, he saw the 'Coon, the 'Possum and the Old Black Crow.

"Hello, up there!" he said. "Don't you fellows want to go fishing?"

Mr. 'Possum said he thought fish would bite well on such a morning, and that he'd like to go first rate. Mr. 'Coon said he knew a place where you could pull them out as fast as you could throw in your hook, and he went on and told how he caught a fish there last year that would weigh more than four pounds, and lost him just as he got him to the top of the water. Mr. Crow said he'd always noticed that Mr. 'Coon's four pound fish never got any nearer to him than the top of the water, and that for his part he didn't care much about fishing. He said, though, that if the 'Coon and the 'Possum wanted to go he'd stay at home and get dinner while they were gone, so's to have it ready when they all came home hungry. He told them that he had some nice canned salmon in the cupboard that he could catch most any time, and that if they really wanted fish for dinner he s'posed he might as well open it. Then they all laughed, and in about a minute down came Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum with their fishing things. Jack Rabbit said he had plenty of bait, so away they went. Mr. Crow sat up in the window and watched them off, and Mr. Robin, who happened along just then, laughed and called after them that he'd take a few pounds of nice bass when they got home. The Robin just said that to plague them, of course, and Mr. 'Coon called back that they'd fool him this time, and then he went on to remark to

the 'Possum and the Rabbit that he'd never in his life seen a finer day for fishing.

Jack Rabbit said yes, that it was fine, and that it was a fine day for Mr. Dog to be out gallivanting over the country, too, and that they'd better hurry up and get to the lake and out in his boat before anything happened. That made Mr. 'Possum take a good deal livelier step, though he commenced to whistle and said he wasn't afraid of Mr. Dog, anyway. Mr. 'Coon said he'd always noticed that a fellow mostly whistled when he wasn't afraid, but for his part he couldn't get to that boat any too soon. And pretty soon they did get to it, and Mr. 'Possum was the first one to pile in, though Mr. Dog wasn't anywhere in sight.

Well, they pushed off and Jack Rabbit took one oar and Mr. 'Coon the other, while the 'Possum sat on the back seat and baited his hook so's to catch the first fish. Then, when they got out to where Mr. 'Coon said the good place was, they all went to fishing, and Mr. 'Possum did get the first bite, but he didn't get anything else when he pulled. Mr. 'Coon told him he pulled too quick, and Jack Rabbit told him he didn't pull quick enough, and asked him if he expected the fish to climb out on his pole. Then Mr. Rabbit had a bite himself, and pulled and didn't get anything, either. Of course, that made Mr. 'Possum laugh, and then, all at once, the 'Coon had a great big bite that took his float away down out of sight the first grab.

DIDN'T CARE WHOSE IT WAS, HE WAS GETTING A FREE RIDE.

Mr. 'Coon let him go for a minute and then gave a hard pull and commenced to call out that he had him this time and that he'd show Mr. Crow now about only getting fish to the top of the water and having canned salmon for dinner. Then he stood up in the boat and pulled as hard as ever he could till all of a sudden his line broke, and down he went backwards, right on top of Mr. 'Possum, while the Rabbit swung his hook over where the 'Coon's hook had been and the big fish grabbed it before you could say Jack Robinson.

That was too bad for the 'Coon and the 'Possum, of course, and it wasn't as much fun for Jack Rabbit as you might suppose, for he couldn't get the big fish out to save his life, and he had to hold on to the boat to keep from being pulled into the lake. Then he called to the others to help him, and they both got up and took hold of the pole and hauled in hand over hand till they got to the line, and that was as far as they could get. So Mr. Rabbit gave the line a twist or two around the iron ring in the front of his boat, and the big fish started straight for shore, dragging the boat and everybody in it behind him, just as hard as ever he could go. Then Mr. 'Coon and Jack Rabbit commenced to quarrel about whose fish it was, and Mr. 'Possum said he didn't care whose it was, he was getting a free ride, and he laid back and laughed and looked at the shore, when all of a sudden he happened to spy there, sitting on the end of a log, fishing and waiting for them, nobody but Mr. Dog himself.

That wasn't very much, of course, but it was plenty for Mr. 'Possum. He quit laughing and tumbled down in the bottom of the boat and laid there calling for Jack Rabbit to cut that fishline or they'd all be chops and steaks and carried home in a basket in less than five minutes. Jack Rabbit did try to cut the line, too, but he was so excited he dropped his knife overboard, and Mr. 'Coon couldn't find his, and Mr. 'Possum didn't have any. So there they were, and there was Mr. Dog! Then Mr. Rabbit tried to bite the line off with his teeth, but he couldn't do that, either, for it was a big, strong line that he'd made himself, 'specially for big fish.

And all the time they were getting closer and closer to the shore, and Mr. Dog had lifted his line out of the water so it wouldn't be in his way, and was sitting there waiting, and smiling to see them come.

Then Jack Rabbit knew that something had to be done, and there was no time to lose. He was just about as scared as he could be, but he knew it wouldn't do any good to let on, so he sat up straight and smiled some, too, and looked at Mr. Dog and called out, big and friendly like:

"Hello, Mr. Dog! Here we come! Here we come with a nice dinner, Mr. Dog!"

Then Mr. Dog laughed and called back:

"That's right, Mr. Rabbit. There's a sure enough nice dinner coming, this time! Fish for the first course, Mr. Rabbit!"

When Mr. 'Possum heard that he began to groan, and Jack Rabbit and Mr. 'Coon began to shiver, for each thought he knew pretty well what the next courses of Mr. Dog's dinner would be. But Mr. Rabbit didn't stop smiling or let on that he knew, and he called out again to Mr. Dog, quick:

"You'll have to help us if we have fish, Mr. Dog! He's a big one and you'll have to help us catch him!"

And Mr. Dog called back again:

"Don't worry, Mr. Rabbit! I won't leave! I'll be on hand when you get here, Mr. Rabbit!"

Then he rolled up his trousers a little and waded out into the shallow water, thinking he would nab Mr. Fish first and drag him out on shore, and then pull the boat right in after him.

Of course, that was a pretty good plan for Mr. Dog, only like some other good plans, it didn't work just as he expected it to. You see, he didn't quite know how big the fish was, nor how hard a big fish is to handle in shallow water. He made a quick grab at it when it got to him and then, right away, he had his hands full of business. That fish gave a flop with his tail that laid Mr. Dog over on his back and then another flop that set him on his feet again, and a side flop that smacked him against the water first one way and then the other, and made him breathe hard and choke and try to let go.

But Mr. Dog couldn't let go, for he'd got the fish line

some way tangled in his teeth. So he began to snap and paw and swallow water, and fall down and get up again, and sprawl about in the swamp grass, trying to get back to shore.

And while all this was going on Jack Rabbit and his friends had jumped out into the shallow water and took a little roundin's to shore, keeping out of Mr. Dog's way, and made tracks for the top of a hill, where they would be out of danger and see the fun at the same time. Then they all stood up there and watched the fight between Mr. Dog and the big fish, and Jack Rabbit sang out, as loud as ever he could:

"Don't leave, Mr. Dog! Stay with him, Mr. Dog! Hold him to it, Mr. Dog; you've got him! First course, Mr. Dog!"

And Mr. Dog heard Jack Rabbit and got madder and madder every minute, till all of a sudden he got a lick on the side of the head from Mr. Fish's tail that made him see stars and broke the line. And away went the big fish out into deep water, while Mr. Dog crawled back to shore, wet and bruised from head to foot, and, most dead.

Then Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum and Jack Rabbit, standing on top of the hill, gave a great big laugh, all together, and Mr. Rabbit called out:

"How did you like the first course, Mr. Dog?"

That made them all laugh again, and then Mr. 'Coon called out:

"Are you ready for the second course, Mr. Dog?"

And pretty soon Mr. 'Possum he called out:

THE FIGHT BETWEEN MR. DOG AND THE BIG FISH.

"Are you ready for a nice roast now, Mr. Dog?"

And that, of course, made them all laugh very loud, for Mr. 'Possum used slang now and then and meant by a "roast" that people would all make fun of Mr. Dog wherever he went; which they did, for a long time.

Even Mr. Robin, who was good friends with Mr. Dog, couldn't help calling out to him, now and then, as he went by:

"Are you ready for the next course, Mr. Dog?"

And Mr. Dog would pretend not to hear and go hurrying by very fast, as if he were out on special and important business for Mr. Man.

THE HOLLOW TREE INN.

"HELLO!" HE SAID, "WHAT'S THIS?"

X

THE HOLLOW TREE INN.

THE THREE FRIENDS GO INTO BUSINESS.

ONE rainy day when the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow were rummaging about their house in the Big Hollow Tree where they all lived together, they found that above each of their rooms there was a good deal of other room that nobody ever used. That set them to thinking, and pretty soon Mr. 'Possum said it was too bad to let all that good room go to waste, and Mr. 'Coon said yes, it was, and that their house was big enough for a hotel.

Of course he didn't think what he was saying at the time, but it set Mr. Crow to thinking and walking up and down, whistling, and pretty soon he stopped still and looked at the 'Coon and 'Possum.

"I'll do the cookin'," he said, "if you'll get the things to cook."

And right then and there they made up their minds to do it, and early the next morning, while the Old Black Crow was hurrying about inside, getting things ready for business, the

'Coon and the 'Possum nailed up a sign outside, and this is what was on it:

THE HOLLOW TREE INN.
BOARD BY THE DAY OR WEEK.

Then they went inside to help Mr. Crow get ready, and by and by they all sat down and waited for people to come. Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum felt pretty well, too, for they thought they would have the easiest time. You see, they had always depended on Mr. Crow a good deal, for, besides being a good cook, he was a great hand to provide, and knew more about where to get the best things, and the best time of day or night to get them, than both of the others put together. So he didn't say anything, but dressed up nice and spruce in a clean apron and cooking cap and leaned out of the window, as cooks always do, with his arms folded. By and by along came Mr. Jack Rabbit.

"Hello!" he said. "What's this?"

Then he read the sign over and looked at Mr. Crow and asked him if it was a joke. And Mr. Crow said:

"Not much! Come up and see."

So then Mr. Rabbit went up stairs and Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum showed him through, and Jack Rabbit said that he didn't feel very well this summer, any way, and he believed he'd just shut up his house and come and board a while for a change. He said he guessed he'd take the room above Mr.

'Coon's, because it had a nice south window and a tall looking glass, and that he'd pack up a few things that he needed and come over right away. Then he went home and the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow all shook hands and danced around in a circle to think how well they were going to do, for if Mr. Jack Rabbit came they were sure of having as many others as their house would hold.

And while they were dancing along came Mr. Robin. He read the sign, too, and laughed, and then knocked at the door till Mr. 'Coon came down and let him in. He thought it was a joke at first, like the Rabbit, but when he heard that Jack Rabbit was coming to board he spoke up just as quick as anything and said he'd come, too, and that he'd have his things there before supper time. He took the room over Mr. Crow, because he said he didn't mind the smell of the cooking, and then maybe he'd learn some new receipts. You see, Mr. Crow and Mr. Robin are sort of kinsfolk, and when they have time they often get together and trace back to find out just what relation they are to each other, and that makes them good friends.

Well, Mr. Robin hadn't more'n got out of the house when who should walk in but Mr. Squirrel.

"What's all this about boarders?" said Mr. Squirrel. "I'm looking for a place to spend a month or two myself."

So then they showed him the room above Mr. 'Possum's, and he was so pleased with the view and everything that he

paid a week's board in advance to be sure of keeping anybody else from getting it. When he was gone the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow did another dance, and kept saying over and over how rich they'd be and what they would do with all the money. Then they heard somebody laughing outside, and when they looked out there was Mr. Turtle laughing and reading the sign.

"Hello!" he said. "This isn't the first of April."

"No," said Mr. Crow, "it's a boarding house, and a good one. All the best people in the country stop here. Mr. Rabbit, Mr. Robin and Mr. Squirrel. Sorry, Mr. Turtle, but our rooms are all full."

Then Mr. Turtle did look cheap, for he thought he couldn't be in the crowd, and it was the very crowd he liked to associate with. But just then Mr. 'Coon happened to think that they might fit up the big room below the other big room where they all gathered to eat and talk, and Mr. Turtle said that would suit him exactly, because he was large and heavy and didn't care much about climbing any way. So he hurried off after his things, too, and he wasn't out of sight before here comes Mr. Dog!

Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum were both looking out the window when he came up, and they jumped back like lightning. You see, they didn't like Mr. Dog worth a cent. Then Mr. Crow came and looked out the window and talked to him. Mr. Dog was just as polite as a basket of chips, and of course that's the politest thing in the world.

"I've just seen Mr. Robin," said Mr. Dog, "and I came to get a room, too."

"Awfully sorry, Mr. Dog, but our rooms are all full," said Mr. Crow.

"Why don't you take down your sign, then?" said Mr. Dog.

"Hotels never take down their signs," said Mr. Crow.

"Hotels are never too full for one more, either," said Mr. Dog. "If you don't let me come in I think I'll wait around here and make a vacancy."

COMING WITH HIS TRUNK ON HIS SHOULDER.

XI

THE HOLLOW TREE INN, Continued.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MR. DOG.

NOW, when Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon heard that their hair stood up straight, for they knew very well that there'd be two vacant rooms any way if Mr. Dog ever got inside, and two if he stayed where he was, for they happened to think that Mr. Rabbit would be coming along presently, and Mr. Squirrel wouldn't be far behind. So they hurried to the back window and looked out, and sure enough there was Mr. Rabbit coming with his trunk on his shoulder and almost there. At first they were frightened most to death for Mr. Rabbit, and then the 'Coon slipped over and whispered to the Crow to keep Mr. Dog talking as hard as he could, so he wouldn't notice anything. All the time he was doing this the 'Possum was motioning to Jack Rabbit to slip up easy-like with his trunk.

So Mr. Rabbit slipped up softly on the other side of the house from Mr. Dog and set his trunk down, and the 'Possum let out a long rope with a hook on it. Jack Rabbit stood up on his trunk and grabbed the hook as soon as he could reach it and hooked it under his arms. Then the 'Coon and the

'Possum pulled and pulled and up he came, and as soon as he was safe they let down the rope and caught the hook in the trunk handle. That was a load for all three of them, and even then they couldn't get it up, and called across to the Crow to come quick and help. So he had to leave Mr. Dog a minute, and when he did that Mr. Dog walked around the tree, and there was the trunk just a few feet from the ground, going up very slowly. That was enough for Mr. Dog. He knew then he'd been fooled, and he was so mad he didn't know what to do.

He took one look at that trunk and made up his mind he wouldn't stand it. So he stepped back a little and made a short run and gave a jump for the trunk, just as high as ever he could.

But Mr. Dog wasn't very lucky, for instead of landing on the trunk he landed his nose right against one corner of it, and that made him madder than ever. He ran and jumped again harder than before, but this time the trunk was a little higher and Mr. Dog didn't quite hit it. There was a strap hanging down, though, and he caught it as he went by. He caught it with his teeth, and two of his teeth went right through two of the holes where the buckle catches, and there they stayed. He had the trunk all right enough, but the trunk had him, too.

There he was. His feet didn't quite touch the ground, and he couldn't get up any higher either. Then all at once the people up stairs saw how it was, and they commenced to laugh

And up he came.

in spite of themselves, and hitched the rope around a peg under the sill so they could rest a minute. That was fun for them, but it wasn't for Mr. Dog, by a good deal. He couldn't laugh, and he couldn't rest, either. And just then Mr. Squirrel came with his trunk, and Mr. Robin with his satchel and a hand bag, and Mr. Turtle with his things in a big sack. Mr. 'Coon ran down and let them all in and locked the door. Then he ran back to the window where Mr. Dog was.

"If we'll let you down will you go home and not come around this hotel interfering with our business?" says Mr. 'Possum.

"Yes; will you promise not to try to get any of our guests away from us?" says Mr. 'Coon.

Mr. Dog couldn't talk much in the fix he was in, but he did the best he could, and promised yes to everything, so pretty soon they let the trunk down till his feet touched the ground, and he could get his teeth out of the strap. Then he put out for home just about as fast as he could go, without so much as thanking them for letting him down, and up went Mr. Rabbit's trunk pretty quick, now that there were plenty to help.

Then the guests all hurried to their rooms to unpack, and Mr. Crow bustled around to get supper with what he had in the house, for Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon hadn't time yet to bring in anything. It was a pretty good supper, though, and all the guests said so, and said they knew what a good cook Mr. Crow was if he had things to work with, and the Crow said

He caught it as he went by.

he guessed he could do his part if the 'Coon and 'Possum would do theirs.

Well, it makes a good deal of difference whether you're company at a house or a boarder. They all felt a good deal like company at first, but by the next evening at supper time they felt different. Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum had been out all day bringing in things, too, and Mr. Crow had been cooking harder than ever. Mr. Robin was first to make remarks. He said that the cherries were canned, and not very good ones at that.

"That's what I said," put in Mr. 'Coon, "but Mr. 'Possum said you wouldn't know the difference."

"Oh, he did, did he?" says Mr. Robin. "Well, I've got better cherries than these at home," and he got up from the table with a disgusted air.

Then Mr. Squirrel picked up some roasted nuts that the Crow had just brought in.

"Where'd you get these nuts?" he says, after he'd cracked one or two of them.

"Down on the slope of Green Bushes," says Mr. 'Coon. "Why, aren't they good ones?"

"I suppose they were once," says Mr. Squirrel—"two or three years ago. Nuts have to be fresh to be good."

"That's what I told him," says Mr. 'Possum; "but he said you wouldn't know the difference."

"Oh, he did, did he?" says Mr. Squirrel. "Well, I've got

THE ARRIVAL OF THE OTHER GUESTS.

better nuts than these at home," and Mr. Squirrel he got up and left the table.

Then Jack Rabbit began.

"Where'd you get this salad?" he says, turning up his nose.

"Out by Mr. Man's back gate," says Mr. 'Possum. "Why, isn't it good?"

"Might have been once," says Mr. Rabbit. "I s'pose it's some Mr. Man threw out because it was wilted.

"That's what I told him," says Mr. 'Coon, "but he said you wouldn't know the difference."

"Oh, he did, did he? Well, I've got better salad than this at home," and Jack Rabbit he got up and he left the table.

And then, pretty soon, Mr. Turtle made a face over the fish because they were salt mackerel and not nice fresh fish, such as he was used to at home. So he got up and left the table, too, and there sat the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow all by themselves and looking cheap enough to fall through the floor. Mr. Crow said it wasn't his fault, and then Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum commenced to blame it on each other, and nearly got into a fight. They were just about to fight when Mr. Crow happened to think of something. Mr. Crow always did think of things.

"I'll tell you!" he says. "We'll just rent rooms."

"Do what?" says Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon together.

"Why, just rent each of our guests his room and let him take his meals out. Then we won't have any work."

Mr. Robin got up from the table with a disgusted air.

"Whoo-ee!" says Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon both together, as loud as ever they could. That made all the guests come running back, and when they heard the new plan they all cheered, too, and said it was just the thing.

So then Mr. Possum went down and got the sign and brought it up and changed it to read:

THE HOLLOW TREE INN.
FURNISHED ROOMS ONLY.

And that was how business began at last in the Hollow Tree

MR. 'POSSUM EXPLAINS.

. Tied his tie for him.

XII

MR. 'POSSUM EXPLAINS.

HOW UNCLE SILAS TRIED TO PLEASE AUNT MELISSY.

WELL, you remember that the Hollow Tree people took four of their friends to live with them and called it the Hollow Tree Inn. Mr. Robin came, and Mr. Turtle, also Jack Rabbit and Mr. Squirrel, and they made a jolly crowd after they got settled and knew about each getting his own things to eat, because the Hollow Tree people—the 'Coon and 'Possum and the old black Crow—found they couldn't suit their guests exactly when it came to a steady diet. So they all kept house together, and used to go out days (and nights, too, sometimes, when Mr. Man and Mr. Dog were tired and asleep and didn't want to be disturbed) and get nice things. Then they'd bring them in and fix them to suit themselves, and have them all on the big table down stairs, nice and comfortable, where they could sit and talk as long as they pleased.

It was a good deal like a big family when they were all together that way, and they used to say how nice it was, and once Mr. 'Possum said he always did think a big family was nice, anyway. Then Jack Rabbit laughed and said he should think Mr. 'Possum was just the kind of a man for a big

family, being fond of good things to eat and not very fond of getting them for himself, and mostly fat and sleepy like. He said if there was just a nice, spry Mrs. 'Possum, now, to keep house and look after things he should think it would be ever so much better than living in bachelor quarters, or, rather, thirds, with Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow, and not having things very orderly. Of course, with himself, Jack Rabbit said, it was different, but even at his house it got lonesome, too, now and then.

Well, Mr. 'Possum thought a minute, and then he said that there was such a thing as folks being too spry, and that it was because he had always been afraid of getting that kind that he had been pretty well satisfied to live in the Hollow Tree just as he was. He said that he had once had an uncle that something happened to in that line, and whenever he thought about poor Uncle Lovejoy he didn't seem to care much about trying anything he wasn't used to. Then they all wanted him to tell about Uncle Lovejoy and what happened to him. So Mr. 'Possum did tell, and it went this way:

"Once upon a time," he said, "Uncle Lovejoy—we always called him Uncle Silas then, and he was uncle on my mother's side, and lived with Aunt Melissy in a nice place just beyond the Wide Pawpaw Hollows—once upon a time, as I was saying, he had to go to town on some business, and that was something that never happened to Uncle Lovejoy before.

"Well, Aunt Melissy was always a spry woman, as I said,

Cousin Glenwood met him at the station.

and stirring—very stirring, and primpy, too. But she was never as stirring and spry and primpy as she was the day that Uncle Silas started for town. She dressed him all up neat and proper in his very best things, and tied his tie for him, and while she was tying it she says:

" 'Now, Silas,' she says, 'when you get to town you buy a few little articles right away and put them on. You don't want folks to see that you come from the country, you know, and you don't want Cousin Glenwood to be ashamed of you before folks. Cousin Glen will know just what things you need and where to get them.' Then she told him not to get run over by anything, or blow out the gas, or let anybody see that he wasn't used to things, because, you see, Aunt Melissy was proud, being a Glenwood herself. Then Uncle Lovejoy promised all those things, and that he would use his napkin and not eat pie out of his hand or drink out of his finger bowl, and a lot more things that Aunt Melissy remembered at the last minute. So you see by the time he got on the train he had a good deal to think about, and he kept thinking about it until by the time he got to the city he'd made up his mind he'd try to do for once everything she told him to and give her a pleasant surprise with the way he had fixed up and improved his manners when he got back. Uncle Lovejoy was good natured and always anxious to please folks, especially Aunt Melissy.

"Well, Cousin Glenwood met him at the station, and about

Took Uncle Lovejoy to the stores.

the first thing Uncle Silas said was to ask him where he got his clothes, and to tell him that Aunt Melissy had said he was to fix up, so's folks wouldn't think he came from the country, which, of course, she had. That just suited Cousin Glenwood, for he liked to spend money and show off what he knew about the city; so he took Uncle Lovejoy 'most everywhere, and told him to buy 'most everything he saw. And of course Uncle Silas did it, because he wanted to surprise Aunt Melissy when he got back and make her feel happy for once in her life.

"Cousin Glen took Uncle Lovejoy to the stores first, and then to a good many different kinds of places afterward, and every place where there was a mirror Uncle Lovejoy would stand before it and admire himself and wonder what Aunt Melissy would say when he got home. He kept buying new things every day, because every day he'd see somebody with something on or carrying or leading something, and when he remembered what Aunt Melissy said, he made up his mind he'd have to have all the things to please her, and he got them as far as he could. Even Cousin Glenwood had to commence buying things pretty soon to keep up, and before long people used to stop on the street and look at them when they went by. Uncle Silas didn't want to go home, either, when the time came, but of course he had to, and he put on his best clothes for the trip, and took a young man he'd hired to wait on him, and started.

And where there was a mirror Uncle Lovejoy would stand before it.

"He didn't tell Aunt Melissy just what time he'd be there, so it was a surprise sure enough. He walked right into the yard, and behind was the young man he'd hired, carrying his things. Aunt Melissy was getting dinner, and had just come to the door a minute to see what time it was by the sun, when all of a sudden, as she looked up, there he was! He had his hat in one hand and a cane in the other, and was leading a game chicken by a string. All his boxes and bundles and the young man were behind him. Uncle Lovejoy wore an eyeglass, too, and smoked a paper thing he said was a cigarette. My little cousins, who were there, told me afterward that their pa had never looked so fine in his life before or since. They didn't know him at all, and neither did Aunt Melissy. She thought he was somebody with something to sell at first, and when he said:

" 'Aw, there, Melissah!' she threw up her hands and was just about to call for help, when just that minute she saw it was Uncle Silas.

"Poor Uncle Silas! He meant to surprise her, and he did it sure enough. He meant to please her, though, and he didn't do that worth a cent. It seemed funny, but she was mad. That's just the trouble about women folks; you never know when you're going to please them. My little cousins said they never saw their ma so made before or since. She made Uncle Lovejoy take off all his nice clothes, and the young man, too, and she cooked the game chicken for dinner.

People used to stop on the street to look at them.

"Aw, there, Melissah!"

Then, right after dinner, she picked up a bag of shinney sticks that Uncle Lovejoy had brought home, and she says to him and the young man:

" 'Now you get out in the garden,' she says, 'both of you, and try to earn back some of this money you've been spending.' And Uncle Lovejoy didn't feel very much like it, but he went, and so did the young man. So did Aunt Melissy, and she used up most of those shinney sticks on Uncle Silas and the young man before fall, and Uncle Silas never saw any of his nice clothes again, though they had the best garden they ever did have, so my little cousins said.

"And that," said Mr. 'Possum, leaning back in his chair to smoke, "that's why I've always been afraid to try family life. It's easier to please one than two, especially when the other one is a spry, stirring person like Aunt Melissy Lovejoy."

"What became of all the good clothes?" asked Jack Rabbit, who was always very stylish.

"Why, I've heard," said Mr. 'Possum, "that Aunt Melissy made some of them over for my little cousins, and that she traded off the rest of them to a pedler for patent medicine to give Uncle Silas for a weak mind, and I think he needed it some myself for trying to please her in the first place."

Mr. Rabbit nodded.

"It takes all kind of people to make a world," he said.

Mr. 'Coon yawned and rubbed his eyes. The others were fast asleep.

THE BEST GARDEN THEY EVER HAD.

THE HOLLOW TREE POETRY CLUB.

HAD TO SCRATCH HIS HEAD AND THINK PRETTY HARD.

XIII

THE HOLLOW TREE POETRY CLUB.

MR. CROW PLANS AN ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE FOREST PEOPLE.

ONCE upon a time, when it was getting along toward fall in the Hollow Tree where Jack Rabbit and Mr. Robin and the others had came to live with the 'Coon and 'Possum and the old black Crow, there began to be long evenings, and the Hollow Tree people used to think of new ways to pass the time. They tried games at first, and sleight of hand tricks. Then they tried doing things, and Mr. Turtle carried them all together twice around the big parlor room on his back. But even that wasn't so funny after the first evening, and Mr. Crow, who did most of the thinking, had to scratch his head and think pretty hard what to do next.

All at once he happened to remember that Jack Rabbit, who was the big man of the party, was also a first rate poet, and liked to read his own poetry better than anything. So, when he thought of that, he said:

"I'll tell you. We'll have a poetry club."

And of course that made Mr. Rabbit wake up right away.

"What's that?" he said. "What kind of a thing is a poetry club?"

"Why," said Mr. Crow, "it's a place where the members each write a poem and read it at the next meeting. You're the only real, sure enough poet, of course, and will be president, and write the best poem, but the rest of us can try, and you can tell us our mistakes. I've heard that Mr. Man has them, and they're ever so much fun."

Jack Rabbit thought so, too, and all the others liked the plan. So they elected Mr. Rabbit president and then went to work on their poems. They couldn't have the first meeting very soon, for it took longer to write poems in those days than it does now, so before they got half ready the news got out some way, and even Mr. Dog had heard of it.

Poor Mr. Dog! It made him really quite ill to think he wasn't on very good terms with the Hollow Tree people, for he thought he could write pretty nice poetry, too, and he wanted to belong to that club worse than anything he could think of. He wanted to so bad that at last he told Mr. Robin that if they'd just let him come he'd promise anything they asked.

They didn't want to let him, though, until Mr. Crow, who always felt kind of sorry for Mr. Dog, said he didn't see why Mr. Dog shouldn't come and look in through the window shutters, and that they could nail a seat for him on a limb just outside. They could pull him up to it with a rope and he

Poor Mr. Dog.

could sit there and listen and applaud the poems all through without being able to do any damage to the poets, and he would be glad enough to be let down by the time they got done reciting.

So they sent him an invitation, and Mr. Dog was as happy as a king. He went right to work on his poem, and he worked all night and walked up and down the yard all day trying to think up rhymes for "joyful" and "meeting," and a lot of other nice words. Even when he was asleep he dreamed about it, and said over some of the lines out loud and jerked his paws about as if he were reciting it and making motions. You see, Mr. Dog hadn't always done just right by the Hollow Tree people, and he was anxious to make a good impression and fix up things. He fixed himself all up, too, when the night came for the meeting, and took his poem under his arm and lit a cigar that he'd borrowed of Mr. Man for the occasion, and away he went.

The Hollow Tree people were on the lookout for him and had the rope down and ready. So Mr. Dog tied it around under his arms, and they pulled and pulled, and up he came. Then, when he got pretty close to the window, they closed the shutter and put the rope through and pulled him up still a little higher, so that he could reach the seat on the limb, which was fixed just right for him to sit there and lean on the window sill while he listened and looked in.

Of course, Mr. Dog wished he was inside, like the others,

but he knew why he wasn't, and he was glad enough to be there at all. He peeked through the slats at the big room and smiled and said some nice things about how pretty the room looked, till they all got real sociable with him. Then Jack Rabbit called the meeting to order and made a few remarks.

He said the duties of his office had kept him from writing quite as long and as good a poem as he would have liked to write, but that he hoped they might be willing to hear what he had done. Then they all shouted, "Yes, yes!" and "Hear, hear!" and Mr. Rabbit bowed first to the ones inside and then to Mr. Dog outside, and began:

THE JOYS OF POETRY.

BY J. RABBIT.

Oh, sweet the joys of poetry
In the merry days of spring,
When the dew is on the meadow
And the duck is on the wing!
For 'tis then, from Dan to Dover,
I'm a rover 'mid the clover,
Seeking rhymes the country over
With a ring, sing, swing—
With a ding, dong, ding,
And a ting a ling a ling—
For I'm the rhyming rover of the spring.

Oh, sweet the joys of poetry
In the pleasant summer time!
For 'tis then I have no trouble
To compose my gentle rhyme;

In a nooklet by the brooklet
I can think up quite a booklet,
As with fishing line and hooklet
I assist the fish to climb
To the music of my chime,
For with rollick and with rhyme
I'm the poet of the pleasant summer time.

Oh, sweet the joys of poetry
When any days have come,
When the autumn zephyrs whisper
Or the winter breezes hum!
For 'tis then my thoughts unfurling,
While the smoke goes upward curling,
Come a whirling, swirling, twirling,
With a rumty, tumty, tum,
Come a twirling, swirling, whirling,
Like the rattle of a drum.
Come a whirling, come a swirling;
For in spring or in the summer,
In the autumn or the winter
I'm the rumty, tumty, tummer
That rejoices in the seasons as they come.

Well, when Mr. Rabbit got through everybody sat still for a minute, till Mr. Dog called out for somebody to come and unwind him so he could get his breath again. Then they all commenced to laugh and shout and pound on the table. And Mr. Rabbit coughed and looked pleased and said it was easy enough to do when you knew how.

Then Mr. 'Possum, who was next on the program, said he hoped they'd let him off this time because he could only think of four lines, and that he was a better hand at the dinner table than he was at poetry, anyway. But they wouldn't do

Mr. Rabbit bowed.

it, so he got up and looked foolish and swallowed two or three times before he could get started.

WHAT I LOVE.

BY A. PUFFINGTON 'POSSUM.

I love the fragrant chicken pie
That blooms in early spring;
I love a chicken stew or fry,
Or any old thing.

Mr. 'Possum's poem was short, but it went right to the spot, and the way they applauded almost made Jack Rabbit jealous. He said that it was 'most too true to be good poetry, but that it was good for a first effort, and that being short helped it. Then Mr. Robin spoke his piece:

MOTHER AND ME.

BY C. ROBIN.

When the bud breaks out on the maple bough
Mother and me we build our nest—
A twig from the yard and a wisp from the mow
And four blue eggs 'neath the mother breast.
Up in the tree, mother and me,
Happy and blithe and contented are we.

When the daisies fall and the roses die,
An empty nest in the boughs to swing—
Four young robins that learn to fly
And a sweet adieu till another spring.
Then up in the tree, mother and me,
Happy once more and contented we'll be.

The applause wasn't so loud after Mr. Robin's poem, but they all said it was very pretty, and Mr. 'Possum even wiped

LOOKED FOOLISH AND SWALLOWED TWO OR THREE TIMES.

his eyes with his handkerchief, because it made him remember something sad. Mr. Rabbit said that it ought to be "Mother and I," but that it didn't make much difference, he supposed, about grammar, so long as it rhymed and sounded nice. Then Mr. Crow got up.

JUST NOTHING.

BY J. CROW.

While others may sing of the pleasures of spring,
  Or winter or summer or fall,
I'll sing not of these, because, if you please,
  I'll sing of just nothing at all.
Just nothing at all, because, oh, ho!
I'll sing of myself, an old black crow.

As black as a coal and as homely as sin—
  What more can I tell you, I pray?
For when you have nothing to sing of, why, then,
  Of course there is nothing to say.
Nothing to say at all, oh, ho!
Except good-by to the old black crow—
The rollicking old black crow!

They made a good deal of fuss over Mr. Crow's poem. They applauded, of course, but they said it wasn't so at all, and that Mr. Crow was a good deal more than "just nothing." They said that it was he who had got up this party, and that he was the best man to plan and cook anywhere. Mr. 'Possum said he even liked Mr. Crow's April fool chicken pies, and then they all remembered and laughed, even to Mr. Crow himself. After that it was Mr. Squirrel's turn. Mr.

Squirrel coughed twice and straightened his vest before he began, so they knew his poem wasn't to be be funny.

THE FOOLISH LITTLE LAD.

BY MR. GRAY SQUIRREL.

Once on a time, the story goes,
A silly squirrel lad
One summer day did run away—
Which made his ma feel bad.

She hunted for him up and down
And round and round she ran—
Alas, that foolish squirrel boy
Was caught by Mr. Man.

For he had tried to climb a tree
As Mr. Man came past.
"I'll make you climb!" said Mr. Man,
And walked home pretty fast.

When he got there a boy came out
As Mr. Man went in.
That silly squirrel soon was put
Into a house of tin.

"Now you can climb!" said Mr. Man,
But when he did he found
That nice tin house, so bright and new,
Turned round and round and round.

And there he climbs and climbs all day
And never seems to stop,
And I have heard my mother say
He'll never reach the top.

When Mr. Squirrel sat down there wasn't a dry eye in the room, and even Mr. Dog outside was affected. He said he'd

seen that poor little squirrel at Mr. Man's house turning and turning away in his tin wheel, and felt so sorry for him that two or three times he'd tried to get him out. He said, though, that Mr. Man had always caught him at it and that then they didn't get on well for a day or two. He was so tender-hearted, though, he said, that he couldn't help pitying the little fellow, climbing and climbing all day long and never getting anywhere. Mr. 'Possum shivered, and said it reminded him of bad dreams he'd had sometimes, when he'd eaten too much supper, and dreamed of climbing the rainbow. Then they all sat still and waited for Mr. Turtle, who came next.

MY SNUG HOUSE.

BY D'LAND TURTLE.

Oh, what do I care for your houses of wood,
  Your houses of brick or of stone,
When I have a house that is cosy and good—
  A beautiful house of my own?
And the doors will not sag and the roof will not crack
Of the house that I carry about on my back.

It is never too large and 'tis never too small,
  It is with me wherever I roam.
In spring or in summer, in winter or fall,
  I always can find my way home.
For it isn't so hard to remember the track
To the house that you carry about on your back.

Well, of course, everybody applauded that, and then it was Mr. 'Coon's time. Mr. 'Coon said he was like Mr. 'Possum. He wasn't much on poetry, and only had four lines. He said they were some like Mr. 'Possum's, too.

LEANED OVER CLOSE TO THE BLINDS AND COMMENCED TO READ.

THE BEST THINGS.

BY Z. COON.

I like the spring, I like the fall,
I like the cold and heat,
And poems, too, but best of all
I like good things to eat.

That brought the house down, and the Hollow Tree people thought the entertainment was over. They were going to have supper right away, but Mr. Dog called out to wait a minute. He said he had a little poem himself that he wanted to read. So out of politeness they all sat still, though they didn't expect very much. Then Mr. Dog unrolled his poem and leaned over close to the blinds and commenced to read.

MY FOREST FRIENDS.

BY MR. DOG.

Oh, dear to me my forest friends,
Especially Mr. Rabbit—
I love his poetry very much,
And every gentle habit.

And dear to me is Mr. 'Coon,
And also Mr. 'Possum;
I hope to win their friendship soon—
'Twill be a precious blossom.

And Mr. Crow and Robin, too,
With fancy sweet and fertile,
And Mr. Squirrel, kind and true,
And likewise Mr. Turtle.

Oh, dear to me my forest friends,
Especially Mr. Rabbit—
I love his poetry very much
And every gentle habit.

Before Mr. Dog was half through reading the Hollow Tree people had gathered around the window to listen. By the time he got to the end of the third stanza he had to stop for them to cheer, and when he read the last one, Jack Rabbit pounded on the shutter with his fist and shouted, "Hurrah for Mr. Dog! Hurrah for Mr. Dog!" just as loud as ever he could, while all the others crowded up and shouted and tried to pound, too.

Well, maybe the shutter wasn't very strong, or maybe they crowded and pounded too hard in their excitement over Mr. Dog's nice poem, for all at once there was a loud crack and the shutter flew open and out went Mr. Rabbit right smack into the arms of Mr. Dog!

I tell you that was pretty sudden and Mr. Rabbit was scared. So were all the others and they were going to grab the shutter and close it again and leave Mr. Rabbit out there. But Jack Rabbit thinks quick.

"Oh Mr. Dog," he said, "that was the nicest poem I ever heard. Let me embrace you, Mr. Dog, and be your friend forever after!"

Then he hugged Mr. Dog just as tight as he could, and Mr. Dog hugged him, too, and shed tears, he was that happy. He had been wanting to make up with the forest people for a long time, but he hadn't expected this. Then the others all saw how it was and they shouted, "Hurrah for Mr. Dog!" again and invited him in. And Mr. Dog went in and they

RIGHT SMACK INTO THE ARMS OF MR. DOG.

had the biggest supper and the biggest time that ever was known in the Hollow Tree.

And that's how Mr. Dog got to be friends with all the Hollow Tree people at last. And he stayed friends with them ever and ever so long—and longer—just as long as he lived, for the Mr. Dog that isn't good friends with them now isn't the same Mr. Dog. And he isn't as smart, either, for he can't write poetry, and he's never even been able to find the Hollow Tree, where the 'Coon and 'Possum and the old black Crow live together and every summer keep open house for their friends.

Then here's good-by to the old black Crow,
And the rest, with a one, two, three!
And here's good-by to the Hollow, Hollow, Hollow—
Good-by to the Hollow Tree.

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XIV

GOOD-BYE TO THE LITTLE LADY.

WHAT SHE WISHES AND WHAT THE STORY TELLER SAYS.

THE Little Lady looks into the fire thoughtfully.

"And isn't there any more about the Hollow Tree?" she says at last.

The Story Teller looks into the fire, too.

"I'm afraid not," he answers.

"And won't you never know any more? Not ever—in a thousand days?"

"I—no, I'm afraid not."

"I wish *we* lived in a Hollow Tree," says the Little Lady.

From the House of Many Windows the Story Teller looks down on the dazzling lights and the clatter and jangle of the street. Then he remembers cool, musky ways in the dim woods, down which the padded feet of the forest people pass silently to hidden homes of peace. The Story Teller sighs.

"Yes, sweetheart," he says, "I have wished that sometimes, too."

THE END.

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